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Pasture

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LEAFLET NO. 543





APPALACHIAN HILLSIDE PASTURE

Prepared from information supplied by Crops Research Division, Agricultural Research Service

If you have a piece of hillside land that is too steep to work, you may be able to use it for pasture. You can feed a milk cow and her calf for most of the year on 4 acres of good pasture or 8 acres of poor pasture. Or you can feed six or eight sheep on 4 acres of good pasture or 8 acres of poor pasture.

Hillside pasture that is in good shape has a thick stand of bluegrass and whiteclover. Hillside pasture that is in poor shape has a lot of broomsedge, poverty grass, briars, and bare ground.

Bluegrass pasture is ready to graze by the middle of April. It usually gives out in July and August, comes back in September, then gives out for the winter in the first of October. When bluegrass gives out, you will need other pasture or hay to feed your stock.

GRAZING

Do not let stock graze the pasture closer than 2 inches. Grazing will not be the same in all parts of the pasture—some parts will be grazed closer than others. When much of the grass on the whole bluegrass pasture is grazed down to about 2 inches, it is time to start the animals on other pasture or on hay. To control grazing if the pasture is not fenced, tie each animal to a stake with a long rope. When the animal has eaten the grass down to 2 inches, move the animal to another place.

SUMMER PASTURE AND HAY

You can grow pasture for midsummer grazing and hay for the winter by sowing a piece of pasture with annual lespedeza. Each cow will need 1 acre of lespedeza pasture. Each sheep will need about one-fourth acre.

The fall before seeding, graze the field close. If the pasture is poor, covered with brush and broom-sedge, you can burn it off instead of grazing it down. If you burn it, be careful not to let the fire get away from you.

Then in spring, broadcast 10 pounds of Korean lespedeza per acre. As soon as the lespedeza gets 10 inches high, it may be grazed or cut for hay. Every day during the winter a cow will eat about 20 pounds of hay. Sheep will eat about 5 pounds of hay every day.

When bluegrass pasture gives out in midsummer, lespedeza will still be in good shape if it hasn't been grazed too close. Turn your stock on the lespedeza pasture to graze. Leave stock on lespedeza until bluegrass starts to grow again in September.

IMPROVING PASTURE

You can improve your pasture with fertilizer. You can feed more animals on improved pasture than on unimproved pasture. If you decide to improve your pasture, don't work on more than 3 or 4 acres at a time; see what happens before you do more.

HOW MUCH?

Korean lespedeza seed costs about 22 cents a pound, so pasture for midsummer grazing and winter hay would cost about \$2.20 the first year for each head of cattle or about 55 cents for each sheep. Lespedeza reseeds itself, so there is no cost for summer pasture or winter hay after the first year.

Fertilizer grade 0-10-20 costs about \$2.60 for an 80-pound sack—\$20.80 a year for 4 acres. But after fertilizing you can put an extra cow on the 4 acres.

You may need to put lime on your pasture, too, but maybe not. Ask your county agricultural agent to test your pasture to make sure.

The fertilizer to use is grade 0-10-20. Spread one 80-pound sack per acre in spring, before you put stock on the pasture. Spread another 80-pound sack per acre in midsummer, after you take the stock off of bluegrass and put them on lespedeza.

If pasture is poor, graze it down close before fertilizing. Clip any broomsedge that is left, then put the fertilizer on. Clover should start coming in thicker right away. The next season, grass should start coming in thicker, too.

This leaflet gives basic information about using native pasture for feeding a few head of cattle or sheep. It has been prepared especially for families in Appalachia, a region that includes all of West Virginia and parts of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

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